

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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TO SECSTATE WASH DC 846

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMCONSUL SURABAYA

CINCPAC

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MEDAN 0091

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ID, PORS

SUBJECT: KOWILHAN I'S CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF THE ACEH INDEPEDENCE
MOVEMENT

REF: A. MEDAN 0086; B. MEDAN 0059; C. MEDAN 0081

1. I CALLED ON COL. GUNARSO, HEAD OF THE INTELLIGENCE UNIT OF THE FIRST TERRITORIAL COMMAND (KOWILHAN I) ON MARCH 14 TO OBTAIN KOWILHAN'S LATEST ASSESSMENT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT FOR ACEH (NLFA) OR GERAKAN ACEH MERDEKA, AS IT IS OFTEN CALLED LOCALLY. COL. GUNARSO BECOMES THE CONSULATE'S PRIMARY CONTACT ON THIS MATTER IN MEDAN WITH THE DEPUTY COMMANDER OF KOWILHAN I, GENERAL SOEKOTJO, WHOM I HAVE APPROACHED OFTEN IN THE PAST, JUST APPOINTED AS COMMANDER OF KODAM VII (CENTRAL JAVA). I PARTICULARLY WANTED TO CHECK WITH GUNARSO CONCERNING SONE REPORTS COMING TO THE CONSULATE LATELY THROUGH MOBIL OFFICIALS AND OBTAINED FROM THEIR CONTACTS WITH INDONESIAN SECURITY OFFICERS AT THE ARUN LNG PROJECT, REPORTS THAT HAVE SEEMED QUESTIONABLE ON SOME POINTS.

2. GUNARSO REPORTED THAT THE SPECIAL FORCES OPERATING IN ACEH HAVE FAILED TO CAPTURE ANYONE FROM THE FIRST CATEGORY OF NLFA LEADERS EVEN
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YET. OF LATE, WHEN THESE TROOPS HAVE TRACKED THEM DOWN, NLFA MEMBERS HAVE JUST FLED FURTHER INTO THE FOREST WITHOUT REMAINING TO FIGHT IT OUT. HOWEVER, HE THROUGHT PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE IN UNDERCUTTING LOCAL ACEHNESE SUPPORT FOR THE NLFA. MORE THAN A HUNDRED PEWPLE HAVE SURRENDERED IN NORTHERN AND EASTERN ACEH. GUNARSO RECOUNTED THAT AT FIRST THESE VILLAGERS AND FARMERS HAD HEHEDED THE TIME HONORED CALL TO THE "HOT BLOODED" ACEHNESE TO JOIN THE FIGHT OF THE NLFA AGAINST THE

OUTSIDERS; THEY HAD SUPPLIED FOOD, MONEY, AND PROTECTION. BUT THE KILLING OF THE AMERICAN AND THE MALAYSIAN IN COLD BLOOD HAD DIMMED THEIR ENTHUSIASM FOR PROVIDING SUCH SUPPORT AND GUNARSO THOUGHT THE NLFA WAS NOW STARTING TO HAVE TROUBLE GETTING ENOUGH FOOD. KOWILHAN I WAS ALSO PLEASED, HE ADDED, WITH THE LOCAL SUPPORT GIVEN TO THE ANTI-NLFA RALLY HELD IN SIGLI, NORHHERN ACEH, ON MARCH 6 (SEE REFTTEL A).

3. GUNARSO COULD NOT ESTIMATE HOW MUCH LONGER THE SPECIAL FORCES WOULD REMAIN IN ACEH; UNDOUBTEDLY SEVERAL MORE MONTHS, HE PREDICTED,

ONCETHE TOP NLFA LEADERS HAVE ELUDED THEM SO FAR. HE SPOKE THEN IN STRONG TERMS OF SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF THUACEH MERDEKA MOVEMENT NOT SIMPLY WITH SECURITY MEASURES BUT ALSO WITH A LONG TERM PROGRAM OF BRINGING DEVELOPMENT TO THE BACKWARD ACEHNESE.

4. I ASKED ABOUT THE FILM THAT REPORTEDLY HAD BEEN FOUND IN A FEB. 13

SPECIAL FORCES RAID ON AN NLFA CAMP NEAR ARUN (SEE REFTEW B) SUPPOSEDLY SHOWING PICTURES OF HASAN DI TIRO IN ACEH AND AN UNIDENTIFIED CAUCASIAN. LATER, MOBIL WAS GIVEN FOUR OF THE PICTURES BY SECURITY OFFICIALS IN ARUN, ALL OF THEM WITH THE CAUCASIAN STANDING

WITH DR. MOCHTAR HASBI, THE NLFA INTERIOR MINISTER, AND MEMBERS OF HASBI'S FAMILY. MOBIL WAS TOLD BY ARUN SECURITY PEOPLE THAT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CAUCASIAN WAS FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN JAKWOTA. (NOTE: OUR CHECK OXSTHESE PHOTOS WITH EMBASSY/JAKARTA REVEALED NO POTUTIVE MATCH WITH ANYONE CURRENTLY WORKING ON THE SOVIET EMBASSY STAFF.) GUNARSO SAID THE FILM WAS FOUND AT THE CAMP BUT THAT IT DATED FROM LATE 1976 WHEN HASAN DI TIRO OPENLY VISITED ACEH. WHEN I ASKED HOW SUCH AN OLD AND STILL UNDEVELOPED FILM COULD BE FOUND AT AN NLFA CAMP IN 1978, HE CONJECTURED THAT THE FILM OWNER HAD SIMPLY BEEN UNABLE TO LEAVE THE JUNGLE AND REACH ANYPLACE WHERE IT COULD BE DEVELOPED. GUNARSO THEN SHOWED ME THE WHOLE SERIES OF PICTURES, INCLUDING TWO SHOTS OF A MAN HE IDENTIFIED AS DI TIRO SITTING WITH VILLAGE MEN; HE PUT THE LOCATION

IN THE SIGLI AREA. AS FOR THE BLOND MAN IN THE PICTURES, GUNARSO BELIEVED HIM TO BE A DUTCH TOURIST VISITING THE AREA AT THE TIME WHO HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN ACEH RELIGIOUS PRACTICES. HE KNEW

OF NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT THE DUTCHMAN WAS HELPING ACEH MERDEKA IN ITS ACTIVITIES. (NOTE: WE STILL WONDER IF THE FILM HAS NOT BEEN IN THE HANDS OF INDONESIAN AUTHORITIES FOR SOME TIME.)

5. GUNARSO DENIED ANY EVIDENCE UNCOVERED TO DATE THAT ACEH MERDEKA WAS OBTAINING FINANCIAL SUPPORT OR WEAPONS FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES. HE

NOTED THAT THE NAVY HAS BEEN SEARCHING BOATS COMING INTO ACEH AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, LOOKING FOR ARMS, BUT TO DATE HAD FOUND NOTHING.

6. GUNARSO TENDED TO BELIEVE THAT THE REPORT OF AN ACEH MERDEKA GROUP

COMING BY BOAT FROM SIGLI TO PICK UP ARMS FROM INCOMING BOATS AND TO ATTACK IN THE LHOK SUKON AREA, INFORMATION AGAIN PROVIDED TO MOBIL BY ARUN SECURITY OFFICIALS (SEE REFTEL C), WAS NOT ACEH MERDEKA AT ALL. GUNARSO SPOKE OF MORE AND MORE PEOPLE IN ACEH, AND EVEN NORTH SUMATRA,

TRYING TO CAPITALIZE ON THE NAME OF ACEH MERDEKA TO SCARE FUNDS OUT OF

PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES. IN THE FIERCELY COMPETITIVE FISHING WORLD ALONG THE COAST OF ACEH, OUTSIDE FISHERMEN COME IN TO PLUNDER THE
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CATCHES OF THE MORE VULNERABLE FISHERMEN. HE THOUGHT THAT THESE PIRATES HAD BEEN USING THE NAME OF ACEH MERDEKA TO MAKE THE FISHERMEN CAPITULATE TO THEIR DEMANDS AND THAT THIS HAD PROBABLY STARTED TH STORY OF AN INTENDED RAID ON LHOK SUKON BY THE NLFA BY SEA.

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7. THE QUESTION OF WHETHER HASAN DI TIRO WAS IN ACEH REMAINED A PUZZLE. GUNARSO SAID THAT MANY PEOPLE WERE REPORTING THIS TO

INTELLIGENCE SOURCES, BUT HE COULD NOT SAY POSITIVELY THAT HE WAS THERE. IN ANY CASE, GUNARSO DID NOT RATE DI TIRO CAPABLE OF ATTRACTING

MANY FOLLOWERS. HE SPECULATED THAT MOCHTAR HASBI WAS PROVIDING THE MOST IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP TO THE NLFA.

8. I DISCUSSED WITH COL. GUNARSO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE GOI WOULD EVENTUALLY ESTABLISH MILITARY CAMPS IN THE ARUN AREA FOR THE LONG TERM

PROTECTION OF ARUN AND OTHER PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. GIVEN THE

DIFFICULTIES OF TRANSPORTING TROOPS TO THE AREA FROM MEDAN OR BANDA ACEH AND THE EXPENSES OF LODGING TROOPS AT ARUN ON A TEMPORARY, ROTATING BASIS, THIS APPEARED TO BE THE MOST SENSIBLE APPROACH FOR THE

FUTURE. GUNARSO SAID THIS IDEA WAS FAVORED BY THE MILITARY IN NORTHERN SUMATRA, TOO, BUT A PROBLEM REMAINED IN CONVINCING HANKAM HEADQUARTERS IN JAKARTA. ESTABLISHING A CAMP MEANT BUILDING HOUSING, SCHOOLS, ETC. FOR THE FAMILIES WHO WOULD ACCOMPANY THE SOLDIERS AND

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THERE WAS NO CERTAINTY THAT HANKAM WOULD, OR COULD, PROVIDE THE NECESSARY FUNDS. GUNARSO HOPED THAT MOBIL AND PERTAMINA WOULD BE WILLING TO GIVE, OR AT LEAST ADVANCE, FUNDS FOR SUCH CAMP CONSTRUCTION.

9. COMMENT: WITH THE RECENT REPORTS OUT OF ARUN OF POSSIBLE SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN THE NLFA AND SUPPOSED PICTORIAL PROOF THAT HASAN DI TIRO

HAD COME FROM THE U.S. TO LEAD THE MOVEMENT IN ACEH, WE HAD BEEN CONCERNED THAT INDONESIAN AUTHORITIES MIGHT BE BUILDING A CASE FOR EXPLAINING AWAY THE ACEH MERDEKA MOVEMENT AS FOREIGN LED. COL GUNARSO'S EXPLANATION TO ME TODAY ESTABLISHES THIS IS NOT THE CASE, AT LEAST ON THE PART OF KOWILKAN I. RATHER THE REPORTS WOULD SHOW A CERTAIN OVER-ACTIVE IMAGINATION AND SPECULATION ON THE PART OF THE INDONESIAN SECURITY OFFICIALS AT ARUN, WHICH THEY PASS ALONG IN THEIR PERIODIC BRIEFINGS TO MOVIL, WITHOUT BENEFIT OF PROPER EVALUATION BY EXPERIENCED INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS.

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